

Tool 58: Option One-and-a-Half

Aim of the tool

Resolving two apparently different ideas or proposals by developing a better alternative.

When to use it?

The commitment stage, when decisions should be made and actions need to be agreed upon.

What is Option One-and-a-Half?

Option one-and-a-half refers to a dialectic group process which develops two opposing options into a third and better option. This tool, developed by Bob Dick, is useful for resolving two apparently different ideas or proposals. It can create agreement out of disagreement.

If there are two solutions to a problem or situation, there are forms of decision analysis which force a choice between them. Rather than forcing a decision that creates a 'winner' and 'loser', Option one-and-a-half instead uses the two solutions to develop a third solution. It tries to retain most of the advantages of both while removing as many disadvantages as possible. It can be applied to more than two solutions; in practice this is difficult, and is warranted only for important decisions or when no options appear satisfactory.

How to facilitate Option One-and-a-Half

The main phases of the technique are as follows:

1. List the two solutions (options). Use questions for clarification to ensure that all participants understand both solutions.
2. Use processes for information collection and analysis to identify the important advantages and disadvantages of option 1. Do the same for option 2.
3. Use creative information generation procedures to develop Option one-and-a-half, a best-of-both-worlds combination of options 1 and 2.

The approach is now described in more detail.

1. List the solutions

List the two solutions. Give participants a chance to understand the two options by asking "questions for clarification only".

- List the two options at the top of a sheet of flipchart.
- Supporters of one option may ask questions for clarification about the other option. Debating the merits of the options is not permitted. Those asking questions may only request information, while those replying must limit themselves to answering the question.

2. Analyse the options

List first the advantages and then the disadvantages of option 1. Select the key advantages and disadvantages. Then repeat this for option 2.

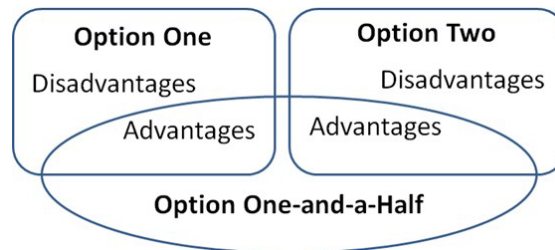
- Use information-collection processes to list the advantages for option 1.
- Use similar processes to list the disadvantages for option 1.
- Supporters for option 2 vote to choose the key disadvantages of option 1.

- Supporters for option 1 vote to choose its key advantages.

Then use the same procedures to list the advantages and disadvantages for option 2 and select the most important. Supporters of option 1 choose the disadvantages, supporters of option 2 choose the advantages.

3. Devise a third option

Use idea-generation techniques to list possible ways of achieving the best of both option 1 and option 2.



- Use idea-generation processes and perhaps creative problem solving techniques to list ideas for achieving the best of both options. This is done as a joint problem solving activity by the supporters of both options. Small groups or pairs (equal numbers of the two groups of supporters) are often appropriate. List ideas as they are contributed.
- Use a voting procedure to reduce the list of suggestions to a manageable length.
- Have participants combine the key suggestions into one solution, which by definition is an attempt at a best-of-both-worlds approach (that is, Option one-and-a-half).
- Check that the solution avoids the key disadvantages of both options.

Concluding Option one-and-a-half

There are four common results of this exercise. All four in their own way allow the group to overcome their disagreement and move on toward implementation:

1. Once all the pros and cons have been displayed, everyone agrees on one option as being better. This process often demonstrates that the problem has been one of miscommunication, or misunderstandings.
2. An amalgam of both options (probably the most common result). Often the problem is one of misunderstandings.
3. A genuinely new option. Often the problem was of a conflict that was able to be resolved in an innovative way.
4. No option emerges. In this case there is a conflict that is unresolvable. This is a fairly common outcome and is still extremely useful, since it demonstrates to a group that is doggedly trying to resolve an issue that it may be unresolvable (at least in its current form). This allows the group to move on from debating the issue, towards reframing it, putting it aside, or working out what needs to be done in order to begin resolving it.

Learn more

Dick, B. (1997) Option one-and-a-half: www.aral.com.au/resources/options.html;
<https://www.bobwilliams.co.nz/ewExternalFiles/half.pdf>

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